SOME NEW BOOKS.

Parliamentary Anecdotes.

An attempt was made some years ago to set forth some of the more striking facts in the history of the British Parliament and in the public life of its distinguished members. It was, however, but a tentative essay in a new and fruitful field, and one of the authors of that book, Mr. G. H. JENNINGS, has now worked out the same idea on a much more extended scale in *An Anecdotal History of the British Parliament* (Appletons). In this closely printed volume of 500 pages has been accumulated a vast quantity of carefully verified and striking facts illustrating the rise and progress of Parliamentary institutions, together with a multitude of stories about the statesmen and politicians who have contributed to their development. The author has collected, in distinct sections, those data that have a direct bearing on the evolution of political principles, and that supply the precedents on which the somewhat nebulous and fluctuating conception of the British Constitution is based. Mr. Jennings's labors in these directions will prove of not a little utility to the student of contemporary English politics, illuminating, as they do, such obscure and perplexing questions as those raised by the Bradlaugh case and by Mr. Parnell's obstructive tactics. It is not, however, the political and legal aspects of this unique compilation to which we would now advert, for any one of a dozen topics suggested by these features of the book would invite prolonged attention. We prefer to avail ourselves of the light thrown on the character and abilities of eminent statesmen, and on important incidents in their Parliamentary careers by the personal anecdotes which form the core of Mr. Jennings's volume.

The part of the author's compend devoted to individual portraiture begins with Sir Thomas More. None of the pointed and memorable sayings, however, attributed to the author of the "Utopia," are here quoted. To Wolsey, who preceded him in the Chancellorship, there are only incidental allusions, while to Thomas Cromwell, who succeeded him, there is no reference at all. Neither has the author found much to record concerning the Parliamentary leaders in the reigns of Edward VI. and Mary. Coming to Elizabeth's time, he cites a remark of Peter Wentworth, the outspoken asserter of civil liberty, which attests the vigilant resistance to authority evinced by the Puritan element in the Church of England at a critical period. "I was," says Wentworth, "sent for, by the Archbishop of Canterbury [Parker], touching the articles of religion that passed the last Parliament [1574]. He asked us 'why we did put out of the book the articles for the homilies, consecration of Bishops, and such like?' 'Surely, sir,' said I, 'because we were so occupied in other matters that we had no time to examine how they agreed with the word of God.' 'What!' said he; 'surely you mistake the matter; you will refer yourselves wholly to us therein.' 'No! by the faith I bear to God,' said I, 'we will pass nothing before we know what it is, for that were but to make you Bishops Popes. Make you Popes who list,' said I, 'for we will make you none.'" That Elizabeth was not far behind the sturdy Puritan in her willingness to hold cheap the dignity of her spiritual lords may be inferred from her well-known letter to Cox, Bishop of Ely, when he showed some reluctance to sacrifice his garden in Holborn to one of the Queen's favorites: "Proud prelate, you know what you were before I made you what you are; if you do not immediately comply with my request, by God, I will unfrock you!" Regarding the rapidity with which Parliamentary business was despatched in those days, Lord Bacon relates that, Speaker Popham coming to Queen Elizabeth at a time when the Lower House had sat long and done nothing, she said to him: "Now, Mr. Speaker, what has passed in the Lower House?" Popham answered, "If it please your Majesty, seven weeks."

One of the neat things said on the patriotic side in the Parliaments of Charles I. was a dream related by a whimsical, crack-brained politician. He saw, he said, "in a dream, two good pastures—a flock of sheep in the one, and a bellwether alone in the other—a great ditch between them, and a narrow bridge over the ditch." Here he was interrupted by the Speaker, who told him that it stood not with the gravity of the House to listen to dreams; but the House was inclined to hear him out. "The sheep," he continued, "would sometimes go over to the bell wether, or the bell wether to the sheep, but once both met on the narrow bridge, and the question was who should go back. One sheep," he added, with a nod toward Hyde and other royalists, "gave counsel that the sheep on the bridge should lie on their bellies, and let the bellwether go over their backs." The application of this dilemma was left to the House. About the same time Pym saved by an ingenious piece of sophistry his friend, Sir Henry Ludlow, from being censured by the House. Ludlow had said, in reference to a certain communication from Charles I., that "he who sent this message is not fit to be King of England." He was about to be punished for the words, when Pym declared that they contained nothing of dishonor to the King. "If these words be such," he said, "that a fair conclusion is naturally deduceable from them, then they cannot be evil in themselves. Now that a fair conclusion naturally ariseth from them may be proved by syllogism. He who sent this message is not worthy to be King of England; but King Charles is worthy to be King of England; therefore, King Charles sent not this message. Now," said Pym, "I leave it to judgment whether or no this syllogism comprise anything in it worthy of censure." Pym's remark to Wentworth, when the latter was about to forsake the patriotic party for the sake of a peerage, is well known: "You are going to leave us, but I will never leave you while your head is upon your shoulders." As it happened, they did not meet again until the great occasion in Westminster Hall, when Pym set forth Strafford's impeachment on behalf of the Commons of England. At the culminating point of his invective, the speaker turned and met the haggard look of his old comrade, who had been intently regarding him, and for the moment the stern tribune is said to have been deprived of his self-possession.

One of the first of Pym's contemporaries to avow himself a republican was Harry Marten, whom Isaac Disraeli calls the Sheridan of his day. As early as 1640 Marten startled Hyde (afterward Earl of Clarendon) by saying: "I do not think one man wise enough to govern us all." Three years afterward Marten was expelled the House and committed to the Tower for saying: "It were better that one family should be destroyed than many." On one occasion a godly member of the Long Parliament made a motion to have all profane and unsanctified persons expelled the House. Harry Marten stood up and moved that all fools should be thrust out likewise, and then there would be a thin House. At another time, in drawing up the remonstrances of the army, which changed the monarchy into a republic, Marten purposely inserted the phrase: "Restored to its ancient government of commonwealth." On a member's objecting to the term "restored," the wit rejoined by a whimsical illustration of its propriety, and the peculiar condition of the man who had now heard it for the first time. "There was," said Harry, "a text which had often troubled his spirit concerning the man who was blind from his mother's womb, but whose sight at length was restored to the sight which he should have had." Once in the House, when Cromwell called Marten, either jestingly or scoffingly, "Sir Harry Marten," "I thank your Majesty," said Marten, rising and bowing: "I always thought when you were King I should be knighted." When, at a later period, Monk was professing to serve the Commonwealth, but really intriguing for the restoration, Marten suspected his designs, and said of him: "He is like a person sent to make a suit of clothes, who brings with him a budget full of burglar's tools, and, being told that such things are not at all fit for the work he has been desired to do, answers: 'Oh, it matters not; I will do your work well enough, I warrant ye.'" The author quotes a remark of Hampden, which shows how early he divined Cromwell. The latter, attired, as usual, in shabby clothes, and rude in voice and manner, had just made a choleric rambling speech, when Lord Digby asked Hampden who the sloven was. "That sloven," said Hampden, "whom you see before you, hath no ornament in his speech; that sloven, I say, if we should ever come to a breach with the King (which God forbid)—in such a case, I say, that sloven will be the greatest man in England."

Of the two great essayists of Anne's reign, Addison and Steele, both of whom entered Parliament, we are reminded that the former (like Gibbon afterward in the same place) could not express himself with any degree of fluency, whereas the latter was an effective speaker. It is related that on a motion before the House Addison rose, and having said, "Mr. Speaker, I conceive," paused, as if scared by the sound of his own voice. He again commenced, "I conceive, Mr. Speaker," when he stopped until roused by cries of "Hear! hear!" whereupon he once more essayed with "Sir, I conceive." Power of further utterance was denied to him, so he sat down amid the scarce suppressed tittering of his brother members, which soon burst forth in a roar when a witty senator said: "Sir, the honorable gentleman has conceived three times, and brought forth nothing." When Steele entered the House, he had to struggle against the same jealousy of literary men which Burke, Sheridan, and Disraeli subsequently encountered. Getting up to support Sir Thomas Hanmer's opposition to the commercial treaty in 1714, he said, "I rise to do him honor," on which many members by calling out, "Tatler, Tatler," cried him down, and as he passed out of the House several said: "It is not so easy a thing to speak in the House; he fancies because he can scribble, &c." The Parliament which met in the first year of George I. was wittily described by Steele as "consisting very much of silent people oppressed by the choice of a great deal to say, and of eloquent people ignorant that what they said was nothing to the purpose." Steele supported the repeal of the act which limited the duration of Parliaments to three years. In his speech he likened the condition of England under the triennial system to "that of a vessel in distress at sea; the pilot and mariners have been wholly employed in keeping the ship from sinking; the art of navigation was useless, and they never pretended to make sail."

Among the several anecdotes of Lord Chesterfield may be mentioned his own account of his speech on the Gregorian calendar. He was entirely ignorant of the subject, and for that reason particularly attentive to the choice of his words and the harmony of his periods, to his elocution and action. Lord Macclesfield, who followed him, and who was one of the greatest mathematicians and astronomers in Europe, spoke with infinite knowledge, but without any heed to rhetorical graces. "The preference," says Chesterfield, "was unanimously, though most unjustly, given to me. This will ever be the case; every numerous assembly is a mob, let the individuals who compose it be what they will." At a certain crisis Chesterfield wished to get the vote of a nobleman who had a weakness for being thought skilled in physic and expert in bleeding. Calling on him, Chesterfield complained of headache, and desired his Lordship to feel his pulse. It was found to beat high, and a hint of losing blood was given. "I have no objection," says Chesterfield, "and as I hear your lordship has a masterly hand, will you favor me with trying your lancet upon me?" Having thus won his confidence, the Earl easily directed his judgment, carried him off to the House, and got him to vote as he pleased. Chesterfield used to say afterward that none of his friends had done so much as he, who had literally bled for the good of his country.

To Sir Robert Walpole, and his great rival, Pulteney, our author devotes a good deal of space. Walpole's opinion of history, based, as it was, upon his own dealings with venal pampleteers, was by no means high. It is recorded that his son, having one day proposed to read to him, and taking down a historical work, he exclaimed: "Oh, don't read history; that I know must be false." His conception of patriotism is well known. "A patriot, sir! Why, patriots spring up like mushrooms. I could raise fifty of them within the four-and-twenty hours. I have raised many of them in one night. It is but refusing to gratify an unreasonable or an insolent demand, and up starts a patriot." How Sir Robert dealt with some of these patriots is illustrated by one of Mr. Jennings's anecdotes. Passing through an ante-chamber of the House he met a member of the opposing party whose Roman virtue he imagined would yield to a large bribe. Walpole took him aside and said: "Such a question comes on this day; give me your vote, and here is a bank bill of £2,000," which he put into his hands. The member replied: "Sir Robert, you have lately served some of my particular friends, and when my wife was last at court the king was very gracious to her, which must have happened at your instance. I should therefore think myself very ungrateful (putting the bank note into his pocket) if I were to refuse the favor you are now pleased to ask of me." Of Pulteney's humor a good example is cited from his speech against Walpole's Excise bill. He said that the Minister's large professions contrasted with his beggarly performance put him in mind of the story of Sir Epicure Mammon in the "The Alchemist." "He was gulled of his money by fine promises; he was proffered the philosopher's stone, by which he was to get mountains of gold, and everything else he could desire; but all ended at last in some little thing for curing the itch." On one occasion, in debate, Pulteney had a dispute about a Latin quotation with Walpole, who wagered a guinea he was right. The book being brought in, the Prime Minister was convinced that he had lost, and tendered the guinea. "I told him," said Pulteney, "I could take the money without any shame on my side, but believed it was the only money he ever gave in the House, where the giver and receiver ought not equally to blush." On the resignation of Walpole, in 1742, the formation of a Ministry was offered to Pulteney on condition that no prosecution should be instituted against the late Premier. To this condition Pulteney declined to agree, saying, "Even should my inclination induce me to accede to these terms, yet it might not be in my power to fulfil my engagement, the heads of parties being like the heads of snakes, which are propelled forward by their tails." Touching his own acceptance of a peerage, Pulteney had said at one time, "When I have turned out Sir Robert Walpole, I will retire into that hospital for invalids, the House of Peers." For his earldom of Bath, however, he had to thank his old enemy who desired to ruin Pulteney in popular esteem. "I remember," writes Horace Walpole, "my father's action and words when he returned from court and told me what he had done—'I have turned the key of the closet on him'—making that motion with his hand." It is said that Pulteney, discerning too late the blunder he had made, when he received the patent of his creation as Earl of Bath, flung the parchment down and trampled upon it. When, some years afterward, Sir Robert, then himself a fallen Minister, and consigned to the hospital of the peerage as Earl of Orford, met Pulteney in the House of Lords, he touched their common sore with the remark, "My Lord Bath, you and I are now two as insignificant men as any in England."

Mr. Jennings has, of course, a great deal to tell us about William Pitt the elder, that lion of the Senate whom we are told the veteran Walpole instinctively dreaded the moment he heard his voice, and exclaimed, "We must muzzle that terrible cornet of horse." We need not remind the reader that the histrionic element was conspicuous in Pitt, and that it is precisely his grotesque and essentially vulgar stage tricks of speech and manner which his numerous imitators from his own time to ours have been most anxious to reproduce. Some of his sallies, said to have been effective, are examples of the close approach made to the ludicrous by theatrical strainings after the sublime. It is related that once in the House of Commons he began a speech with the words, "Sugar Mr Speaker," and then observing a smile to pervade the audience, he paused, looked fiercely round, and with a loud voice, rising in its notes, and swelling into vehement anger, he is said to have pronounced again the word "sugar" three times, and having thus quelled the House and extinguished every semblance of levity, turned round and disdainfully asked, "Who will laugh at sugar now?" The only comment suggested by this anecdote is that the House of Commons at that epoch must have been curiously chicken-livered and easily cowed. On another occasion Chatham seems to have paralyzed his audience, although, as in the case of Bottom the weaver, it was done with nothing but roaring. "Who," sang out Chatham, "are the evil advisers of his Majesty? I would say to them, Is it you? is it you? is it you?" pointing to the Ministers, until he came near Lord Mansfield. There were several peers standing around the latter, and Lord Chatham said, "My lords, please to take your seats." When they had sat down, he pointed to Lord Mansfield and said, "Is it you? Methinks Felix trembles." At another time Pitt frightened an inoffensive member out of his wits by calling him to order in sepulchral tones, and desiring that his words might be taken down. The poor man stammered forth an apology, saying that he meant nothing, but this did not hinder Pitt from trampling on him with the following piece of bombastic impertinence: "I have," he said, "a great regard for the honorable member, and, as an instance of that regard, I give him this advice: Whenever that member means nothing, I recommend him to say nothing." It is refreshing, in view of the exaggerated homage paid in his lifetime to the elder Pitt, to find that, once at least, his auditors had the sense to see that a flux of grandiloquent language might disguise a penury of ideas. Pitt had made, it seems, a very long and vehement speech in the Privy Council relative to some naval matter. Every one present was struck by the force of his eloquence. Lord Anson, on the other hand, who was then at the head of the Admiralty, and differed entirely in opinion from Mr. Pitt, got up and only said these words: "My lords, Mr. Secretary is very eloquent, and has stated his own opinion very plausibly. I am no orator, and all I shall say is that he knows nothing at all of what he has been talking about." This short reply, coming from a man of Anson's professional skill, had such an effect that they immediately voted against Pitt's proposition.

From Lord Chatham to Lord North would generally be deemed an abrupt transition, but it is a mistake to suppose the latter wanted readiness or keenness of repartee. Like Harry Marten, the Parliamentary wit of the preceding century, he was wont to sleep a good deal in the House, but those who woke him up sometimes repented of it. Thus, when a vehement declaimer denounced the Minister as capable of sleeping while he ruined his country, and called aloud for his head, North only complained how cruel it was to be denied a solace which other criminals were permitted to enjoy—that of having a night's rest before their fate. When surprised in a like indulgence during the performance of a very inferior artist, who, however, showed equal indignation, North contented himself with observing how hard it was that he should be grudged so very natural a release from considerable suffering. Then, pretending to recollect himself, he added that it was somewhat unjust in the gentleman to complain of him for taking the remedy which he himself had been considerate enough to administer. Another opponent in the midst of a tedious invective exclaimed: "Even now, in the midst of these perils, the noble lord is asleep." "I wish to God I were," said North. On an occasion when Col. Barré brought forward a motion on the British navy, Lord North said to a friend of his sitting next him: "Now, Barré will give us our naval history from the beginning, not forgetting Sir Francis Drake and the Armada. All that is nothing to me; so let me sleep on, and wake me when we come near our own times." His friend at length roused him, when Lord North exclaimed: "Where are we?" "At the battle of La Hogue, my lord." "Oh, my dear friend," said North, "you have woke me a century too soon." Such reminiscences are said to give but a faint idea of North's habitual pleasantry and gayety of thought. When he chose, he could be caustic, too. One Alderman Sawbridge, having accompanied the presentation of a petition from Billingsgate with accusations of more than ordinary virulence, Lord North began his reply as follows: "I cannot deny that the Hon. Alderman speaks not only the sentiments, but the very language, of his constituents." To Lord Chatham, who had been arguing for Parliamentary reform, and declaring that 100 should be added to the representatives of counties, or, as they used to be called, knights of the shire, North replied with playful humor: "Some ask with Lear for 100 knights, and some with Goneril for fifty, but I say, with Regan, what need of one?" During the American war Lord North at a city dinner, having announced tidings of an advantage gained over the "rebels," and being taken to task by Charles Fox for applying such language to our "fellow subjects in America," exclaimed with the good-humored raillery which seldom failed him: "Well, then, to please you, I will call them *the gentlemen in opposition on the other side of the water.*"

We come now to the galaxy of brilliant names which in the last quarter of the last century illumined the House of Commons with an incomparable radiance. To the chief orators of the period, Burke, Fox, and Sheridan, a large place is properly allotted in Mr. Jennings's repertory. Burke had once, it seems, occasion, as Lord Thurlow had, to refer to his own relatively humble origin. It was in reply to a member named Onslow, who sought to add weight to his opinions by claiming descent from three Speakers of the Commons. To this Burke scornfully adverted: "I have not the advantage of a Parliamentary genealogy. I was not born, like the honorable gentleman, with 'order' running through my veins. But as that gentleman boasts of his father, let me tell him that his own son will never boast of him." Dining with Pitt, in the year 1791, Burke strove to alarm his host on the aggressive nature of French revolutionary principles. Pitt made rather light of the danger, and said, "This country and Constitution are safe til the day of judgment." "Yes," Burke quickly retorted, "but 'tis the day of *no* judgment I am afraid of." While speaking on the civil list Burke was annoyed by the interruptions of a member who occupied a position in the royal household, and who kept calling upon the orator to remember his duty to the King. Finally the speaker paused and remarked that "he was perfectly ready to honor the King, but he did not feel himself constrained therefore to honor the King's man servant, his maid servant, his ox, and"—fixing his eyes upon the obnoxious intruder—"his ass." Burke's phrase in reference to the Bishops in the House of Lords, as contrasted with the treatment of the clergy in France during the revolution, has been often quoted. "We have not," he said, "relegated religion to obscure municipalities or rustic villages. No. We will have her to exalt her mitred front in courts and Parliaments." The small and noisy politicians, who were then as great a nuisance in the House of Commons as they now are in the American Congress, were thus characterized by Burke: "Because half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink while thousands of great cattle beneath the shadow of the British oak chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field, or that they must needs be many in number, or that after all they are other than the little shrivelled, meagre, hopping, though loud and troublesome, insects of the hour." Referring to the animosity he was charged with evincing against Hastings, he justified it by alleging the patience and perseverance of his inquiries. "Anger, indeed, he had felt, but surely not a blamable anger, for who ever heard of a digesting anger, a collating anger, an examining anger, a deliberating anger, a selecting anger?" Some time having elapsed after his first notice of a motion in the Hastings case, he was called upon by a friend of the accused to produce his charges. Burke's haughty reply to the demand was the relation of an anecdote of the great Duke of Parma, who, being challenged by Henry IV. of France to bring his forces into open field, answered with a smile, that "he knew very well what he had to do, and was not come so far to be directed by an enemy."

Of Fox, although Burke called him the greatest debater the world ever saw, comparatively few trenchant and epigrammatic sayings are preserved. We have better means of measuring Sheridan's parliamentary abilities. It is curious that the latter's first speech, like Disraeli's first venture, was a failure. His friend Woodfall felt constrained to tell him, when asked for his opinion, "I am sorry to say I do not think that this is your line; you had much better have stuck to your former pursuits." On hearing which Sheridan rested his head on his hand a few minutes, and then vehemently exclaimed, "It is in me, however, and by G— it shall come out!" During the debates on the India bill, at which period John Robinson was Secretary to the Treasury, Sheridan, referring to the fact that the votes of the opposition were decreasing, said: "Mr. Speaker, this is not at all to be wondered at when a member is employed to corrupt everybody in order to obtain votes." Upon this there was a great outcry made. "Who is it? Name him, name him." "Sir," said Sheridan to the Speaker, "I shall not name the person; it is an unpleasant and invidious thing to do so, and, therefore, I shall not name him. But don't suppose, sir, that I abstain because there is any difficulty in naming him. I could do that, sir, as soon as you could say Jack Robinson." Criticised by Lord Ellenborough for the figurative observation that "the treasures in the zenana of the Begum were the offering laid by the hand of piety on the altar of a saint," Sheridan replied, "This is the first time in my life that I ever heard of special pleading on a metaphor, or a bill of indictment against a trope; but such is the turn of the learned gentleman's mind that when he attempts to be humorous no jest can be found, and when serious no fact is visible." Somewhat similar was his reference to Dundas, described as one "who generally resorts to his memory for his jokes, and to his imagination for his facts." Asked by some one, on the conclusion of his speech at the Hastings trial, how he came to compliment Gibbon with the epithet "luminous," which so delighted the historian, Sheridan answered in a half whisper, "I said voluminous." But perhaps none of Sheridan's elaborate epigrams produced such an effect upon his auditors as an unpremeditated sentence uttered in the course of a debate on the liberty of the press: "Give them," said he, "a corrupt House of Lords, give them a venal House of Commons, give them a tyrannical Prince, give them a truckling court, and let me have but an unfettered press, I will defy them to encroach a hair's breadth upon the liberties of England."

The oratory of William Pitt the younger was conspicuous at once for its dignity, circumspection, and poverty of expression. Lord Brougham characterized his diction as a "state paper style," and said he verily believed Mr. Pitt could deliver a king's speech off hand. Now and then, however, a keen or witty sentence would relieve the sustained and elaborate exposition of his argument. Speaking against the coalition in 1783, he closed his peroration by a simple but effective figure: "And if this inauspicious union be not already consummated, in the name of my country I forbid the bans." On one occasion, when a bill came up for calling out the volunteers, the Minister was a good deal worried by country members, who insisted the step should not be taken "except in case of actual invasion." Pitt replied that would be too late. By and by the same gentlemen objected to another clause, and declared they would never consent to the volunteers being sent out of England. "Except, I suppose," rejoined Pitt, "in case of actual invasion." At another time Pitt, alluding to his small number of adherents on the Declaratory bill, said that he appeared in the House of Commons as Eve in the Garden of God, single and naked, yet not ashamed.

Pitt was present at the curious scene in the House of Lords described by Mr. Jennings, when Thurlow astounded his colleagues by his unexpected gush of loyalty. The question of the Regency had been raised by the illness of George III., and Thurlow had been intriguing with both political parties. Having made up his mind that his interest lay on the King's side, he left the Woolsack and addressed the House, concluding his speech with the impressive exclamation, "And when I forget my King, may my God forget me!" On hearing Lord Thurlow's imprecation, Pitt is said to have rushed out of the House, exclaiming several times, "Oh, what a rascal!" Burke, on the same occasion muttered, "The best thing that can happen to you," and Wilkes, eyeing the Chancellor askance, said *sotto voce*, "God forget you, he will see you d—— first." It is well known that Wilkes was far from feeling the patriotism he affected, that, indeed, he made a boast of his insincerity. Standing on the hustings at Brentford, his opponent said to him, "I will take the sense of the meeting." "And I will take the nonsense," replied Wilkes, "and we shall see who has the best of it." During the same contest, Wilkes asked his adversary privately whether he thought there were more fools or rogues among the multitude of Wilkites at the polling place. "I'll tell them what you say, and put an end to you," said his opponent, but perceiving the threat gave Wilkes no alarm, he added, "Surely you don't mean to say you could stand here one hour after you did so?" "Why," the answer was, "*you* would not be alive one instant after." "How so?" "I should *merely* say it was a fabrication, and they would destroy you in the twinkling of an eye." Some years later, when his popularity had declined, the King, receiving him at his levée, asked him after his friend, Sergeant Glyn. "Sir," said Wilkes, "he is not a friend of mine; he is a Wilkite, which I never was."

From the speeches of Wilberforce our author cites one remarkable passage, which is said to have produced an electrical effect upon the audience. It was an allusion to Mr. Pitt's resisting the torrent of Jacobin principles: "He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague was stayed." Effective, too, was Romilly's retort when one of the Crown lawyers, resisting his attempt to amend the criminal law, showed that he was mistaken in the date of a particular statute. "What care I," rejoined Romilly, "whether this law was made by one set of barbarians or another?" Of Addington our author relates several anecdotes. The neatest thing ever said of this lucky mediocrity was Canning's allusion to the favor he enjoyed with George III., and the consequent pressure upon Ministers to give him office. "Addington," said Canning, "is like the small-pox, that every one is obliged to have once in their lives." Castlereagh was a weak, confused, and tedious speaker, yet he would sometimes stumble on curt and pithy sayings, one of which, "the ignorant impatience of taxation," has become a current phrase. Another stereotyped expression, "the wisdom of our ancestors," is due to Sir William Grant, who employed it in opposing Romilly's reforms. Another opponent of reform, Lord Eldon, is credited with a neat retort. He was presenting an anti-Catholic petition from the Glasgow Company of Tailors, when Lyndhurst, who had lately changed sides on the question of Catholic relief, said in a stage whisper, "What, do tailors trouble themselves with such *measures*?" "My noble and learned friend," rejoined Lord Eldon, "might have been aware that tailors cannot like turncoats." Eldon, by the way, is said to have been much annoyed by Lord Byron's attack on him when the latter first addressed the House of Lords. Of the poet's first venture in oratory Sir F. Burdett said that it was "the best speech by a lord since the Lord knows when." It was Hobhouse, the friend and fellow traveller of Byron, who invented the phrase "His Majesty's Opposition." Canning accepted the appellation as appropriate, and Tierney said: "No better term could be adopted, for we are certainly a branch of his Majesty's Government. Although the gentlemen opposite are in office, we are in power. The measures are ours, but all the emoluments are theirs." We may here mention that the term "Radical," as designating advanced reformers, was first used by Joseph Hume. Cobbett's talent for fastening his claws into anything or anybody by a nickname is well known. Where he could not affix reproach he would manage to attach ridicule by such epithets as Prosperity Robinson, the "pink-nosed Liverpool," the "bloody *Times*," the "unbaptized, buttonless blackguards" (by which phrase he chose to designate the disciples of Penn).

Of Canning, Lyndhurst, Peel, and the Duke of Wellington a good many anecdotes are recorded, but Lord Brougham furnishes more terse and pungent sayings than all of them put together. Canning, of course, having no fortune and no family interest, had to meet the taunt of being an adventurer, or, as our American dialect would have it, a "carpet-bagger." His answer to this charge is well known, and we cite only a single sentence. "If," he said, "to depend directly upon the people as their representative in Parliament, if to lean on no other support than that of public confidence—if that be to be an adventurer, I plead guilty to the charge, and I would not exchange that situation, to whatever taunts it may expose me, for all the advantages which might be derived from an ancestry of a hundred generations." Touching the cant of "measures, not men," Canning laughed at "the idle supposition that it is the harness and not the horses that draw the chariot along." Brougham took much the same ground, declaring that so long as a set of men can act secretly in ministerial functions we are imperatively called upon to look at them and their character, as well as at the measures they propound. Canning, when Premier, is said to have offered the post of Chief Baron of the Exchequer to Brougham, who refused it on the ground that it would prevent his sitting in Parliament. "True," was the reply, "but you will then be only one stage from the Woolsack." "Yes," returned Brougham; "but the horses will be off." Apropos of Brougham's aspiration for the Chancellorship, our author cites a gibe of Lyndhurst's. "Brougham," said he, "here is a riddle for you: Why does Lord Brougham know so much about the navigation laws? Answer—Because he has been so long engaged in the Seal fishery." The most crushing reply which Brougham ever received was after a prolonged and violent diatribe against the Melbourne Government. Melbourne's reply was comprised in a single sentence: "My lords, you have heard the eloquent speech of the noble and learned lord, one of the most eloquent he ever delivered in this House, and I leave your lordships to consider what *must* be the nature and strength of the objections which prevent any Government from availing themselves of the services of such a man."

From some remarks attributed to the Duke of Wellington, it is plain that he sometimes expressed his mind in compact, telling phrase. When George IV., for instance, protested that he could not do what he had said, on his honor as a gentleman, he would not do, "Pardon me, sire," said the Duke; "I don't agree with you at all. Your Majesty is not a gentleman." The King started. "Your Majesty, I say," continued the imperturbable soldier, "is not a gentleman, but the sovereign of England, with duties to your people far above any to yourself." Another of the Duke's remarks has passed into an apothegm. "Let it not," he said, "be forgotten that a great country like this can have no such thing as a little war. If we enter on military operations at all, we must do it on such a scale and in such a manner, and with such determination as to the final object, as to make it absolutely certain the operations will succeed, and that, too, at the earliest possible moment." Sententious enough was the allusion by which the Duke once indicated his opinion of Palmerston. Called out of the House, he whispered to a friend on his return: "That was Palmerston, who wanted to see me to tell me if Huskisson went out of office he must go too. I said nothing," continued the Duke; "it was not for me to fire great guns at small birds." The Duke's colleague, also, Sir Robert Peel, though not by any means distinguished for wit, is credited with occasional gleams of quiet sarcasm. When Feargus O'Connor was charged in the House with being a Republican he denied it, and said he did not care whether the Queen or the devil was on the throne. Peel replied, "When the honorable gentleman sees the sovereign of his choice on the throne of these realms, I hope he'll enjoy, and I'm sure he'll deserve, the confidence of the Crown."

As might have been expected, some of the best things collected in this volume were uttered by Irish speakers who entered the imperial Parliament after the act of Union. The author directs special attention to Lord Plunket, who was so conspicuous in the advocacy of Catholic emancipation, and to O'Connell and Sheil, the great champions of Repeal. Explaining why he had become a Reformer, although he had before opposed agitation, Lord Plunket said: "Circumstances are wholly changed. Formerly Reform came to our doors like a felon—a robber to be resisted. He now approaches like a creditor; you admit the justice of his demand, and only dispute the time and installments by which he shall be paid." Mr. Jennings recalls O'Connell's comment on the defence set up by a Parliamentary reporter for misquoting the Liberator's speech, viz., that the rain had streamed into his pockets and washed out his notes. "This," O'Connell remarked, "was the most extraordinary shower of rain he had ever heard of, inasmuch as it not only washed out the speech he did make, but washed in another, and an entirely different one." Familiar is O'Connell's sneer at the fewness of Lord Stanley's personal adherents after some general election:

> "Thus down thy hill, romantic Ashbourne, glides
> The Derby dilly carrying six insides."

Equally ready was his parody on three members of Parliament, Colonels Sibthorp, Perceval, and Verner, two of whom looked as if they never needed a razor, and the third as if he repudiated one:

> "Three Colonels, in three distant counties born,
> Lincoln, Armagh, and Sligo did adorn;
> The first in matchless impudence surpassed;
> The next in bigotry; in both the last.
> The force of nature could no further go,
> To beard the third she shaved the other two."

In a speech of Sheil's, during Peel's administration, occurred a prophetic passage which might now be applied with singular pertinence to the Gladstone Cabinet. "The grievances of Ireland," he said, "have been fatal to several Governments, and even now," pointing with bended form to that part of the floor which lies before the treasury bench, "have dug the grave that is yawning before the present one." Felicitous was Sheil's retort, when charged with backsliding by Feargus O'Connor, who said he could remember hearing Sheil on the hustings tell the people what their rights were, and that if they could not get them by peaceful means he would not shrink from leading them when other efforts must be tried. "But did you never hear," said Sheil, "what the people said to me afterward? They told me they knew very well I had no more notion of taking up arms, or leading them to the field, than Feargus O'Connor." We should here observe that besides his excerpts from the speeches of Irish orators in the imperial Legislature (most of which are too long for quotation), Mr. Jennings adverts, not infrequently, to the wit, irony, and sarcasm so lavishly displayed in the debates of the Irish House of Commons. But that subject is too large for cursory and incidental allusion, and the humors of the Parliament on College Green would supply ample matter for a companion volume of anecdote. Indeed, the *bons mots* of Curran, Flood, Grattan, and their contemporaries, and the delicious bulls of Sir Boyle Roche, are not surpassed, if equalled, in mirth-provoking qualities by anything in this repertory.

Mr. Jennings gives a hundred pages to the statesmen and debaters who have figured in office or opposition during the past quarter of a century. Many of the utterances and incidents recorded are not only diverting, but extremely instructive from an historical point of view. Few of them, however, are set forth in a form sufficiently compact to be comprehended in this notice. Not many speakers of our own time have exhibited the turn for neat and pithy expression which we have had occasion to remark in the orators of previous generations. Lord Palmerston, it is true, seemed now and then to continue the tradition of jocose and pointed observations. Lord Westbury, too, had a remarkable gift of razor-like irony. Lord Beaconsfield makes frequent use of terse and burnished sentences, which are thought, however, to have a somewhat pinchbeck glitter; and Lord Sherbrooke unquestionably is an adept in the coinage of caustic epithets and winged words. Mr. Gladstone, on the other hand, whose power over an audience is not equalled by any of his contemporaries, and whose dexterity in debate is undeniable, is, nevertheless, not a phrasemonger, and his contribution to the stock of current quotations is relatively small. On the whole it may be said that the epigram has ceased to flourish in the House of Commons. We may note, nevertheless, some flashes of the ancient fire. Telling, for example, was the retort made by Lord John Russell, when Burdett, after turning from Radical to Tory, thought proper to sneer at the cant of patriotism. "I quite agree," said Lord John, "with the Honorable Baronet that the cant of patriotism is a bad thing. But I can tell him a worse—the *re*-cant of patriotism—which I will gladly go along with him in reprobating whenever he shows me an example of it." Worth citing, too, is the illustration by which Palmerston enforced his argument that city sewage should be utilized for fertilization. "Now, gentlemen," said he, "I have heard a definition of dirt. I have heard it said that dirt was nothing but a good thing in a wrong place. The dirt of our towns precisely corresponds with that definition. It ought to be upon our fields. Thus the country would purify the towns, and the towns fertilize the country." Often quoted is the phrase used by Sir E. B. Lytton, when opposing the Reform bill introduced in 1860, and pointing out the irrevocable nature of the step proposed. "Democracy," he said, "is like the grave—it never gives back what it receives." Perhaps the aptest illustration ever employed by Disraeli was his criticism on the tactics of Sir Robert Peel: "The right honorable gentleman caught the Whigs bathing and walked away with their clothes." We need not say that the metaphor precisely describes Disraeli's own strategy in passing the second Reform bill; a measure which his own colleague, Lord Derby, termed "a leap in the dark," but to which he was reconciled by the reflection that "we have dished the Whigs."

A tart simile of Cobden's, and some happy thoughts of Bright's, may be noted before we take leave of Mr. Jennings's voluminous and admirable compilation. Cobden was referring, we are told, to a former associate, who had experienced a sudden change of political convictions and entered the Cabinet. The speaker illustrated the abrupt and grotesque conversion of his friend by a story of an Irishman who went over to the West Indies, and before landing heard some of the blacks speaking tolerably bad English, whereupon, mistaking them for his own countrymen, he exclaimed, "What, black and curly already?" "I have often noticed," continued Cobden, "how colors change and features become deformed under the influence of the Treasury atmosphere, but never have I seen a change in which there has been so deep a black and so stiff a curl." Not less happy was the illustration by which John Bright characterized the situation of the great middle class in 1866. It reminded him, he said, of the language addressed to one of his sons by the Hebrew patriarch: "Issachar is a strong ass crouching down between two burdens." Great merriment, too, was excited by Bright's comparison of the Derby-Disraeli Ministry that passed the second Reform bill, to the Christy Minstrels. "These minstrels," said Bright "are, I am told, when they are clean washed, white men; but they come before the audience as black as the ace of spades, by which transformation it is expected their jokes will seem more amusing. Now, conversely, the Derby minstrels pretend to be liberal and white; but the fact is, if you come nearer and examine them closely, you will find them just as black and curly as the Tories have been. I do not know." Bright added with a twinkle in his eye, "which of them it is that plays the banjo, and which the bones." Referring, on another occasion, to the inadequacy of Disraeli's measures purporting to deal with Irish questions, he said they reminded him of a mountebank mentioned by Addison, who set up a stall in a rural district, and offered to sell the country people pills that were proof against the earthquake. Bright's Scriptural illustrations are often marked by a singular beauty as well as pertinence. Referring to his own reluctance to accept office, he said that he had always been charmed by the story of the Shunammite woman contained in a single verse of the Old Testament. In return for her hospitality, the prophet wished to make her some amends, and said: "Shall I speak for thee to the King, or to the Captain of the host?" Bright went on to say that it had always appeared to him a great answer that the Shunammite woman returned. She said: "I dwell among mine own people." M. W. H.

A Primer of French Literature.

We have often pointed out how signally the task of the young student is lightened in our day by the admirable handbooks for which we are indebted to men of first-rate acquirements and high reputation. There is now scarcely any department of literature or science to which a key is not supplied by some introductory manual at once lucid and trustworthy, comprehensive and compact. There is not one of these, however, which more completely satisfies a real want, which surveys a wider field, or which has larger claims to be accounted a masterpiece of condensation than a *Primer of French Literature*, by GEORGE SAINTSBURY (Harpers). The writer's familiarity with the minor as well as the greater authors of the classical period would have alone sufficed to give us a useful and suggestive book, had he chosen to model his essay on previous English expositions of French literature, most of which seem to have accepted the dictum of Boileau, that no student need look further back than Villon in the last half of the fifteenth century. We cannot now recall a single preceding treatise purporting to offer, in small space, a conspectus of French letters which has assigned more than a dozen pages to the authors before Malherbe. The remarkable feature of Mr. Saintsbury's work, on the other hand, is the encyclopædic breadth of scope and the catholicity of taste. How striking and, so to speak, revolutionary is his attitude in these respects, may be shown by the fact that almost one-half of his 200 pages are devoted to the writers who preceded the beginning of the classical period, which may be roughly identified with the year 1600. To those readers whose knowledge of French literature is confined to the stereotyped channels the first half of this little book will be in some sort a revelation. As regards, indeed, the first three chapters, comprising some seventy or eighty pages, it may be said that the materials could not have been collected sixty years ago without a life's labor, and that the very names of most of the books and authors mentioned were at that time unknown, even to well-informed Frenchmen. The "Chansons de Gestes," for instance, although they included the "Song of Roland," the noblest epic poem composed in the French language, were known only in late prose versions. Of the "Fabliaux," or stories in verse, resembling the lighter of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," only antiquarians took cognizance by extract and analysis. With the Arthurian romances here and there a student might be conversant, not, however, in their original prose or secondary verse form, but in later prose paraphrase. As to the lyric poems, the "Mysteries," and the less noteworthy prose works, they were virtually forgotten. Indeed, until very lately it was customary to regard the old French, in which prose and verse had been composed, from, let us say, the "Song of Roland" to the "Roman de la Rose," as a distinct language from modern French, separated from the classical idiom of Racine by an interval well nigh as wide as that which severs both from Provençal or even from Italian. Diez, for instance, in his comparative grammar of the Romance languages treats old French as a distinct type. The prevailing tendency, however, of recent scholarship has been to bridge over the gulf and repudiate the distinction. As regards this fundamental affirmation of continuity and identity, and the large consequences that flow from it, Mr. Saintsbury accepts the authority of M. Littré, and in general upholds the view of the romanticists as against the more conservative opinions of the Academy. Sometimes he seems to understate the linguistic difficulties encountered by the students of the earliest French literary monuments. He says, for example, that the Chanson de Roland—which is at least as old as the Norman conquest—can be read with no more difficulty than Chaucer by any one who has acquired a fair knowledge of modern French. We should certainly except to this statement if we are to understand by it that a student is expected to read both Chaucer and the Chansons without the help of dictionaries. If lexicons, however, may be used, the labor would be nearly equalized, because no general dictionary of the English language affords much help to a student of Chaucer, whereas a great deal of light is thrown on the very earliest French poems by Littré's vocabulary. Yet even his great work is so far from being an exhaustive lexicon of the older language that M. Godefroy has undertaken a compilation specially devoted to the more archaic forms. We venture to say that if all expository apparatus were discarded in both cases, ten educated Englishmen could read a page of Chaucer even in the unmodernized, unamended text, sooner than one Frenchman could spell out as many lines of "Roland." We admit the interval of at least three centuries between the poets, and we think it only fair to postulate a corresponding strangeness of structure and idiom. No doubt the song of Roland, whose vocabulary is mainly drawn from the Latin, is easier to a modern Frenchman than an Anglo-Saxon chronicle of the eleventh century to an Englishman of to-day.

Mr. Saintsbury is careful to disabuse the reader's mind of the impression that the early epics, of which "Roland" is the oldest and best—the Chansons de Gestes, or songs of families, as the term literally means—are mere rude stories or legends. It is natural enough that the impression should be current, seeing that every French critic, for 200 years, from Malherbes to La Harpe, if he mentioned "Roland" at all, would speak of it in the condescending tone adopted by Dryden toward Chaucer's verse, when he said, "There is the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune in it." In fact, the Chansons de Gestes are written in regular verse, nearly as polished and careful as Frenchmen write now. There is, to be sure, one curious thing about them, to wit, that the older ones are not rhymed, but are written in what is called assonance. Such, we need not say, was the common practice of Anglo-Saxon poets, and to this day what passes for rhyme in Spanish verse is content with an identity of vowel sounds, without regard to the arrangement of consonants. Even the modern French conception of rhyme is far less perfect than our own, since it tolerates an identity of consonants in the initial as well as final letters of rhymed syllables.

It would seem that these primitive French epics present an almost perfect analogy to those Greek rhapsodies of which the Iliad and Odyssey are survivals. Not only was the subject similar, namely, the martial prowess of some famous warrior, but the audience contemplated was the same, namely, the descendants, kinfolk, or partisans of the hero chronicled. Moreover, just as the Greek epics were not, in all likelihood, committed to writing until long after the date of their composition, so the Chanson de Geste was generally recited by a class of men and women called jongleurs and jongleuresses, who went about from house to house repeating poetry. Those who wrote the poems were not called jongleurs, but "trouveurs," though sometimes, a trouveur would sing and recite his own works. Mr. Saintsbury seems disposed to distinguish the name trouveur, applied to the authors of the earliest epics, from the "trouvères" of a subsequent age (twelfth century), who composed short songs and tales. Both words, of course, as belonging to the poets of northern France, must always be differentiated from "troubadour," which properly denotes a Provençal singer. The most striking thing about the French trouvères is their inexhaustible invention; it is a literal truth that, for some centuries, almost every country in Europe contented itself, in the way of fictitious literature, with translations and adaptations from the Fabliaux and romances produced in the lands north of the Loire.

In a chapter on the thirteenth century Mr. Saintsbury points out that Adam de la Halle, whose name is unknown to most English readers, was a decidedly important figure in the history of French literature, as being apparently the inventor of comedy and operetta. Mystery and miracle plays had been written for some time, but it seems to have struck Adam that there was no reason, in the nature of things, why the subjects and persons of drama should always be of a religious character. He accordingly wrote a play in which he himself, his father, and many other citizens of Arras, his native town, are brought on the stage. He also took the popular pastorelle of "Robin et Marion," and, by making the various personages speak and sing, instead of merely telling their story himself, he transformed a narrative poem into an operetta. Nobody, so far as we know, had done anything similar to either of these innovations in a modern language before, nor did any one do anything of the kind again for many years. In this same chapter on the thirteenth century there is a digression to Provençal literature, which, being buried in a language at least as distinct from modern French as is Spanish or Italian, does not properly fall within the purview of his work.

In a chapter on the decline of mediæval literature, Mr. Saintsbury considers the causes of the relative dearth of first-rate literary work in the two centuries between the reign of Philip the Fair and of Francis I. Almost the only names of this period with which the ordinary reader is familiar are those of Froissart, Comines, Charles d'Orleans, Alain Chartier, and François Villon. Mr. Saintsbury is not at all disposed to frown on the recent attempts to exalt the merits of Villon, for he can see that the strange poems called "Testaments," in which the author bequeathed his experiences and opinions, are studded with ballads and rondeaux full of a sad and beautiful poetry. Indeed, the note of regret expressed in the burden of one of Villon's ballads—*Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?*—has passed into the stock of current idiom. Mr. Saintsbury would not refer the literary decadence of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to political causes, such as the decay of feudalism and the English wars. The decline was inevitable, simply because the old civilization had written itself out. Nothing better, of the kind, could be done than the Chansons de Gestes, the Arthurian stories, the Fabliaux, the Roman de Renart, and the Roman de la Rose, while, on the other hand, neither the language nor the stock of general ideas and subjects of thought were as yet fitted for a new kind of writing. What was needed for a new literary birth was a complete change in thought and language, and when, at length, the next period of general excellence occurred the conditions, the stock in trade, and the objects of literary work had been entirely transformed. Of this new period, the French Renaissance, which occupied the sixteenth century, and which may be said to have begun with Marot and ended with Regnier, Mr. Saintsbury gives at once a full and concise account. But here we enter on more familiar ground, and would commend the reader to the book itself, which, although called a primer, will be read with profit and, we suspect, with not a little humility, by mature and accomplished students of French literature.

The Ventilation of Mines.

The Belgian Academy of Science has received a report on the researches made by M. Fabre regarding the diseases to which coal miners are especially liable. He finds that, as coal absorbs rapidly up to [illegible] times its own volume of oxygen, the air which the miners have to breathe is deprived of oxygen to a hurtful degree; the atmosphere [illegible] is also further vitiated by the gaseous carbon compounds given off by the slow combustion of the coal. M. Fabre concludes that [illegible] is more essential than that of [illegible] even the best ventilated [illegible] ventilation.